



April 1, 2019

L. Francis Cissna  
Director  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
20 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20529

Dear Director Cissna:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to express concern about the significant H-1B visa backlog for highly skilled employees, including international medical graduates (IMGs), foreign trained physicians who are actively practicing in the U.S., due to the per-country numerical limitation for employment-based immigrants under the Immigration and Nationality Act. We urge the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to clear the backlog for conversion from H1-B visas to permanent resident status for physicians.

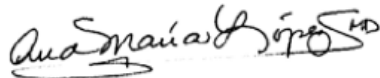
The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 154,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

ACP is concerned about the impact of the green card backlog on IMGs. Many of these physicians have come to the United States on H-1B visas, and find themselves stuck in a decades-long backlog waiting for employment-based green cards due to the per-country cap. These physicians serve an integral role in the delivery of health care in the United States. They contribute essential care to underserved populations in the United States. In addition, many patients express greater comfort and higher levels of patient satisfaction which improves adherence to care with care from physicians “who look like them”. This element of diversity to the physician workforce is helpful and necessary to the health care for an increasingly diverse patient population. IMGs provide health care for underserved populations in the United States and are often more willing than their U.S. medical graduate (USMG) counterparts to practice in remote, rural areas.

A January 2018 report estimated that approximately 20.8 million Americans live in areas where at least half of the physicians, and nearly 70 percent of the primary care physicians, are foreign-

trained. Several projections indicate a shortfall of physicians in both primary and specialty care in the United States over the next decade. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), shortages already exist across the country. There are currently 7,026 designated primary care health professional shortage areas, and HRSA estimates that it would take approximately 14,900 additional primary care physicians to eliminate them. The U.S. has depended on IMGs to fill gaps in care in underserved areas since the 1970s and will likely continue to do so for some time. It is critical that the significant H-1B visa backlog is cleared for IMGs who are actively practicing in the U.S. so that they can continue to make vital contributions to the delivery of health care in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ana María López MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Ana María López, MD, MPH, MACP  
President